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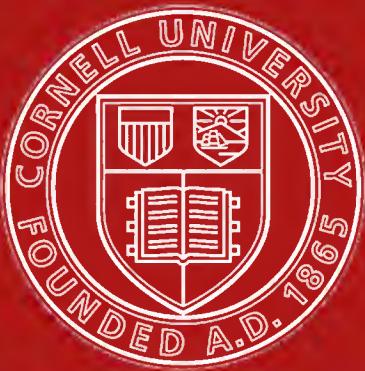
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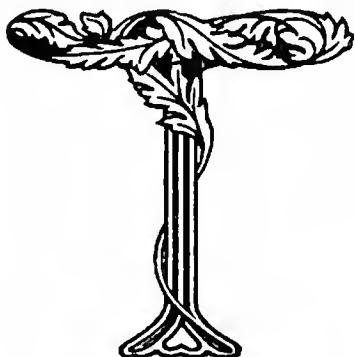
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WHAT WE OWE : : TO FRANCE : :

BY

FRANK LANDON HUMPHREYS, S. T. D.

GENERAL CHAPLAIN OF THE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI, CHAPLAIN VETERAN CORPS OF ARTILLERY S. N. Y. AND THE MILITARY SOCIETY OF 1812. CHAPLAIN OF THE NEW YORK COMMANDERY OF THE NAVAL ORDER OF THE UNITED STATES, ETC. : : : : : : : : : : :



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LAFAYETTE.

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What We Owe to France

The debt we owe to France and her sons is great. Even before the first soldier was landed to support our cause against the British, the French had won a far greater position of influence than is generally known. Admiral de Coligny planned to found a French colony in the New World, and one hundred years before the Puritans landed at Plymouth, French colonists sailed from Havre de Grace in July, 1555, under Villegagnon, for Brazil. A second colony of noblemen sailed from France November 2, 1556. The colony was a failure, but into the causes of that failure we need not now enter. The next expedition to Florida under Ribault was equally unsuccessful. In March, 1604, two ships sailed from Havre to Canada. It is interesting to note that investigation has proved that Priscilla who came on the Mayflower was

a French woman, the daughter of Guillaume Molines, corrupted into William Mullins. Priscilla de Molines by her marriage with John Alden became the ancestress of the New England Aldens, and from this descent came John Adams, second President of the United States. John Alden himself also had French blood in his veins. In 1622 French colonists settled in Staten Island and in 1675 many also formed settlements in Ulster County. In 1685 many French residents of the West India Islands came to New York City. In 1686 Massachusetts granted a large tract to French refugees and in 1689 numbers of French exiles settled at New Rochelle. In 1699 about three hundred French families established themselves on the banks of the James River, and large numbers had already settled in South Carolina. One remarkable thing about the French is that they never formed a separate race in this country; they quickly assimilated themselves, and the change of

their surnames into anglicised forms greatly conduced to this obliteration.

Many even so-called Dutch emigrants were really Frenchmen, or of recent French descent. For instance, the Deschamps became the Van der Veldes; the Leblancs, the De Witts; the Dubois, the Van der Bosch; the Chevaliers, the Ruyters; the Le Grands, the De Groot; and so on. The list of French names that have been anglicised is too long to be given; it amounts to several hundred names. A modern writer pays this just tribute to the French colonists:

“The American colonies were largely remunerated for the generous hospitalities they extended to the French Protestants. In Massachusetts the latter cleared the forests then surrounding the Boston and Oxford settlements, and introduced the culture of the pear, quince and grape. The founders of New Rochelle reclaimed smiling fields and fruitful gardens from a savage wilderness; and thus, too, were the

uncultivated lands of the James River transformed into fruitful farms and rich harvests. Along the banks of the Cooper, in South Carolina, they planted the olive, the vine and the mulberry, with most other productions of Southern France. When Charles II., in 1680, sent the first band of French Protestants to Carolina, his principal object was to introduce into that colony the excellent modes of cultivation which they had followed in their own country. Their lands, an early traveler (Lawson) states, presented the aspect of the most cultivated portions of France and England; and he adds, 'They live like a tribe, like one family, and each one rejoices at the prosperity and elevation of his brethren.'

"The mechanics and merchants chose Charleston for their residence, and they became a valuable addition to the then newly founded American colony. They established silk and woolen manufactories, and made the cotton *Romalls*, so much

demanded in America, and similar to our universally used bleached muslins. Thus the refugees added greatly to the national prosperity and wealth of the United States.” *

Among the proudest of the Carolinian and other Southern families we find the French names of the Ravenels, Neuvilles, Manigaults, Laurenses, Marions, Bacots, Benoits, and Bayard, and in the North we have names that have been indelibly associated with our history—Jay, Bowdoin, Cannon, Berrian, Boudinot, Pintard, Quintard, Demarest, Gallaudet, Guion, Constant, Joline, Lanier, Le Boutilliers, Maury, Pelletreau, de Forest, Le Blanc, Cortelyou, Vermilye, &c.

Faneuil Hall, of which Boston and New England are so proud, and which is called the Cradle of Liberty, was the gift of the son of a Frenchman. Henry Laurens, John Jay, and Elias Boudinot, who took

*G. P. Disosway in the Huguenots in America, by Samuel Smiles, p. 437.

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such a prominent part in the early deliberations touching our independence, were all three of French descent. Coming to the war itself, the forgotten fact is that so evenly were the French and Dutch matched in point of influence in New York that by 1656 all government and town proclamations were issued in French and Dutch, and French services were held in the Fort Chapel. When the war broke out, the French and the French descendants fought for the independence of the colonies as bravely and as faithfully as any.

The immediate fruit of the French alliance was the reduction in the number of British troops in America. Formerly, Howe had a command of 60,000 and a fleet of fifty large warships and twenty-five armed sloops and cutters. After the conclusion of the alliance, Clinton never had over 20,000 troops in all his positions North and South and seldom as many as twenty-five warships. The French alli-

ance was of a vital necessity to the patriots. The whole question hinged upon what aid France would give and especially what her navy could do against that of England. The patriots might deal with the British land forces, but they were in despair about the navy and without the active aid of France or Spain they had not much hopes of maintaining themselves.

Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga made a great change in the prospects of the revolutionary forces. The Count de Vergennes, the steady friend of Franklin, and the constant advocate of intervention, at last won over the French Government to his views. In accordance with his plans supplies had been sent secretly by Beaumarchais, and Hortalez and Company (Hortalez and Company, being really another name for Beaumarchais), but after the defeat of Burgoyne, the secrecy was no longer considered necessary, and accordingly the treaty of alliance with the

Americans was signed February 6, 1778. Our alliance with France naturally led, later on, to Spain siding with France, and the active assistance and the passive encouragement of Russia were all of great help to us in our struggle. France, however, furnished nearly the whole naval force and most of the credit and money, a large part of the troops, guns, and military supplies, at a cost to her of over twelve hundred and eighty million francs.

The sailing of the French fleet for America caused the evacuation of Philadelphia.

When, in the autumn of 1780, Congress again determined to appeal to France for further aid, it was Colonel John Laurens, the Huguenot, whom they sent to Washington to receive his final instructions in this delicate matter, and Washington himself wrote the documents that made this last appeal to France. Laurens reached Paris in April, 1781, and secured from the French Government an agreement to

guarantee a loan of ten million francs from Holland if it could be had. He secured 7,000 French troops and a very large fleet, which reached the coast of America the following summer under Admiral de Grasse.

Trevelyan says in his *History of the American Revolution* (Vol. IV., p. 410) :

“Almost everyone, who was somebody, in Paris or at Versailles, had American sympathies; and nobody was at pains to conceal them. The new reign had relaxed the springs of despotic authority, had unpeopled the Bastille, and had set all tongues free to criticise and argue. The courtiers were not afraid of the King; and other members of the royal family were afraid of the courtiers, who seldom failed to impose their own view of politics upon those above them. The Comte d'Artois had been powerfully affected by the craze which was known as Anglomania. He is said to have evinced his re-

spect and esteem for our nation by refusing to make bets with any except Englishmen; and that was no barren or valueless compliment, for he had sometimes lost as much as six thousand Louis d'or at a single race-meeting. And yet, as soon as the frequenters of the *Oeil de Boeuf* began to take sides,—or, more properly speaking, to take one side,—in the American controversy, the Comte d'Artois, Prince of the Blood though he was, had no choice but to sink his English proclivities, and declare himself a 'Bostonian' with the rest. The young Queen had not been educated as a patroness of rebels. She was brought up by a mother who, of all sovereigns that ever lived, was perhaps the most indefatigable and conscientious assertor of the doctrine that people should stay quietly where their rulers had placed them. Marie Antoinette's favourite brother, and the only person on earth of her own generation by whom she would submit to be lectured, was the Emperor

Joseph the Second; and Joseph regarded a monarch who encouraged disaffection in the British colonies as a traitor to his own caste. When an attempt was made to enlist his good-will on behalf of the American insurgents, he coldly replied that his vocation in life was to be an aristocrat. But the influence of her Austrian family over the Queen's mind was not strong enough to preserve her from the contagion of the new ideas. Her most intimate associates had always been women; and the warmest advocates of American liberty were to be found among a sex which never is half-hearted in partisanship. 'Woman' (wrote a French historian under the second Empire,) 'in our sad day the prime agent of reaction, then showed herself young and ardent, and outstripped the men in zeal for freedom.' Marie Antoinette obeyed the impulse which pervaded the society around her, and threw herself into the movement with frank and vivid enthusiasm. Long afterwards, when

the poor lady had fallen upon very evil days, one of her determined political antagonists expressed himself as bound by justice and gratitude that 'it was the Queen of France who gave the cause of America a fashion at the French Court.' "

In regard to Washington's visit to Hartford, in 1780, we read in the Life of Governor Jonathan Trumbull, by Isaac W. Stuart (pages 484-486) :

"In order to settle them—'to combine some plan of future operations' which events might render practicable—arrangements were made for a personal interview between the French and American commanders in chief. It was to take place at Hartford, Connecticut, September twentieth—and Trumbull was to be present. On a Monday morning, therefore, Washington—with General Knox and La Fayette for companions, and some other officers of his suite—set out to meet Count Rochambeau and Admiral Ternay at the appointed place. It is a singu-

lar and interesting fact, related by Gordon—and one which shows strikingly the pecuniary pressure of the times—that, on the departure of Washington and his party from Camp—they were compelled to send about in every direction in order to ‘muster up’ money with which to pay the expenses of their contemplated trip—and that after strenuous exertions all they could obtain was eight thousand paper dollars*—such was the ‘scarcity’ says Gordon, ‘even of that depreciated commodity at camp.’ Before quitting New York, they had expended ‘more than half their stock’—and were much embarrassed by the idea that soon they would become quite unable ‘to pay their way.’ Nevertheless they ‘put a good countenance’ on the matter, ‘when in Connecticut,’ says Gordon—‘called for what they wanted, and

*In 1779 \$100 in specie could buy \$2600 of paper currency. \$8000 paper dollars were therefore worth only about \$300 of specie. According to certain tables in September, 1780, \$7100 of paper was worth only \$100 of specie. Washington and his friends, therefore, had only about \$111.

were well supplied, but the thought of reckoning with their host dampened all their pleasure. To their great joy, however, when the bills were called for, they were informed that the *Governor* of Connecticut had given orders that they should *pay nothing in that State, but should be at free cost!*

“Gordon is correct — Trumbull’s thoughtfulness upon this occasion *did* anticipate their wants and those too of the French commanders and their suite,—for, September nineteenth, say the Records of the Council of Safety, ‘*agreeable to the orders of his Excellency*,’ three hundred and forty-five pounds are to be drawn from the Treasury ‘for the reception and entertainment’ of George Washington, and the French General and Admiral at Hartford.

“Upon their appearance in the city they were received with imposing ceremonies.

“The Governor’s Guards, and a company of Artillery, were on duty upon the

occasion. They saluted Washington as he entered the town with thirteen guns. Trumbull and Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth, and other distinguished personages of the State, met him as he advanced. They gave him a cordial welcome—and through crowds that rent the air with cheers, and strained to catch a sight of the illustrious Commander-in-chief, the latter made his way, together with Knox and La Fayette, to the residence of their mutual friend, Colonel Wadsworth—there upon the site where the Historical Society of Connecticut now lifts its walls—and where in a beautiful mansion, still standing, * though upon another spot, himself and his principal officers were nobly entertained during their stay.

“The same ceremony was repeated soon after Washington came upon the arrival of the French Commander and suite. They were formally received at the City Landing after crossing the ferry, and

*This “Life” was published in 1859.

marching to the area in front of the Capitol were met there by General Washington and his military companions. It was the first time that these distinguished leaders of the great Allied Armies saw the faces of each other—the first time that through their chief martial representatives France and America shook hands, and the spectacle is described as having been one of the most august and inspiring character.”

In his “Early Lebanon,” published in 1880, Orlo D. Hine gives, on page 64, an interesting account of the French troops at Lebanon.

“Count Rochambeau was at Lebanon about the first of June, 1781, with his five sparkling regiments of Bourbonnois, on their march from Newport, Rhode Island, to join the American Army on the Hudson, and camped in Lebanon about three weeks. The Duke de Lauzun, with his legion of 500 mounted Hussars, was also quartered here from about December 1,

1780, to June 23, '81, a period of seven months. Their barracks were on the slopes of the hill west of the Trumbull house, and near the rivulet above the pond. A gay June for Lebanon was that, when these six brilliant French regiments, with their martial bands and gorgeous banners, were daily displayed on this spacious and lovely village green. Gen. Washington himself reviewed Lauzun's legion here on the 5th of March of that year, and highly complimented them and their commander on their appearance and discipline. He spent three days in Lebanon at that time in a long and close conference with Gov. Trumbull; and it is believed that this conference related to the plan of the southern campaign, which resulted in the surrender of Cornwallis and his army and led to the final termination of the war; and that this confidential disclosure of that plan was one of the first which was made to any one, and was most heartily approved and encouraged by promises of

efficient support by Gov. Trumbull. This plan was afterwards confidentially considered and perfected, at a Joint Council of the American and French chief-commanders, held at the 'Webb House' in Wethersfield, on the 21st and 22nd of May following." *

In "The French in America," originally published in French at Paris in 1872, by Thomas Balch of Philadelphia under the title: "Les Français en Amérique pendant la Guerre de l'Indépendance des Etats Unis" 1777-1783; and translated into English by his son Thomas Willing Balch and published at Philadelphia in 1891—it is said (Vol. I., pp. 79-83) : † "Already in 1775, we find in the *American Archives* that two French officers, Penet and de Pliarne, were recommended by

*Gen. Washington enters in his Diary, dated at Wethersfield, May 20, 1781: "Had a good deal of private conversation with Gov. Trumbull, who gave it to me as his opinion, that if any important offensive operation should be undertaken, he had little doubt of obtaining men and provisions adequate to our wants."

† See the original edition, pp. 69-72.

Governor Cook, of Providence, to General Washington, that he might hear the proposals which they had to make in behalf of the cause of independence. These officers arrived from Cap Français (St. Domingo) and were received in December by Congress, which accepted their offers concerning supplies of powder, arms and other warlike stores. The secret agreement that was then concluded was executed, at least in part, for, in a letter dated from Paris on the 10th of June, 1776, by Dr. Barbue-Dubourg to Franklin, he says that he has heard from him, through Penet, who had returned from Philadelphia, that a supply of fifteen thousand guns from the royal factories, which had been delivered to him under the name of *La Tuillerie*, gunsmith, was about to leave Nantes with the same Penet.

“Barbue-Dubourg, who was a zealous agent of the American party, wrote at the same time he had engaged, with the promise of the rank of captain, and by means

of some advances of money, the Sieur Favely, a soldier of fortune and formerly a lieutenant of infantry. To the Sieur Davin, formerly a distinguished sergeant-major, he had promised only the payment of his passage over the sea. He had also engaged de Bois-Bertrand, a young man, full of honor, courage and zeal, who in France held the commission of a lieutenant-colonel, but who asked for nothing. I have met with the names of these officers nowhere else. But I see in another correspondence, that de Bois-Bertrand set out in July, 1776, taking with him, at his own expense, two subalterns of great bravery. Barbue-Dubourg had led him to expect the rank of colonel.

“The American militia was in want of engineers. Again it was Barbue-Dubourg who undertook to procure them. In his letter of June the 10th, 1776, already quoted, he thus expresses himself on the subject: ‘I have engaged two engineers: one M. Potter de Baldivia, very

young, but well educated, the son of a Chevalier of St. Louis, who was an engineer attached to the Duke of Orleans; the other, **Gille de Lomont**, a young man of remarkable merit, although he has not yet been employed except in peace; but we cannot induce any others to accept.

“ ‘I have spoken to **M. de Griebeauval**, lieutenant-general of the armies of the king and director of the artillery, who believes that we must send you three, one of whom would be chief, **M. Du Coudray**, a distinguished and envied officer, who served in Corsica, and whose knowledge of chemistry might be useful.

“ ‘The only engineers who were sent to America with a secret mission from the French government were **de Gouvion**, **Du Portail**, **La Radière** and **Laumoy**. They were engaged by **Franklin**, then in Paris, who had been entrusted by Congress with that negotiation; but they did not arrive in America until after **La Fayette**, on July the 29th, 1777.

“The oldest of the volunteer officers concerning whom I have positive information is de Kermovan. On March the 24th, 1776, Barbue-Dubourg wrote from Paris to Dr. Franklin, at Philadelphia: ‘I seriously think that the Chevalier de Kermovan is one of the best men that your country can obtain. He has already accepted its principles, and asks for nothing before having made his mark; but he is ambitious of obtaining a high rank when his zeal and talents shall have been proved. He is as ready to expose himself to every danger as a simple volunteer as if he were commander-in-chief. He seems to me well acquainted with the military art.’

“He left France on April the 6th; and on June the 21st, 1776, the *Board of War*, having decided that the Chevalier de Kermovan had given undoubted evidence of his good character and skill in the art of war, recommended him to Congress as an engineer, and believed that the authorities of Pennsylvania ought to employ him up-

on the works at Billingsport, on the Delaware. He was commissioned on these conditions on the 4th of July, 1776.

“Let us also mention among the volunteers who accompanied La Fayette, preceded him, or followed him closely: De Mauroy, who had accompanied him in his flight from France; De Gimat, his intimate friend and aid-de-camp; Pontgibaud, who was also his aid-de-camp; Armand de la Rouerie, better known as *Colonel Armand*, whose chivalric bravery, liberal character, and adventures made him popular in America; de Fleury, the hero of Stony Point; Mauduit du Plessis, the hero of Red Bank.”

Mr. Balch, in his second volume, which remained in manuscript in French until translated by his son, Edwin Swift Balch, in 1895, sketches the careers of many who served in America. These brief memoirs of three of the higher officers are of value in carrying out the purpose of this paper.

“Duportail (Louis Le Bègue), student at the Military School of Mezières; entered the engineers as officer in 1761; captain in 1773. The 28th of July, 1777, he was sent to America by Franklin with Gouvion, Radière and Laumoy. He obtained from Congress the title of chief engineer with the rank of colonel; brigadier-general, the 17th of November, 1777. The 25th of April, 1780, he was attached as lieutenant-colonel to the corps of French infantry, and during the siege of Yorktown he directed, under the orders of Désandroins, the work on the trenches. He is one of the higher officers whom Washington mentions particularly as having helped in the capture. He obtained afterwards the cross of Saint-Louis, with a pension of twenty-four hundred *livres* and the promise of the rank of brigadier-general after the peace. Congress, on its side, raised him to the rank of major-general. He returned to France where he was *maréchal de camp* in 1788. Through

the influence of La Fayette he obtained, the 16th of November, 1790, the portfolio of minister of war. He resigned after the disgrace of La Fayette; was condemned by accusation on the 15th of August, 1792, and hid in Paris for twenty-two months. In 1794 he fled to America, and on the 28th of June, 1797, Mathieu Dumas succeeded in having his name struck off the list of emigrants. He died at sea while returning to France in 1804.

* * * * *

“Estraig (Charles-Hector Count d’), born in 1729 at the Château de Ruvel in Rouergue, of an illustrious family. His first rank was that of colonel of infantry. He embarked as brigadier the 2nd of May, 1757, with Lally-Tollendal for the East Indies, and learned there something about naval matters; taken prisoner in 1759, at Madras, after having been wounded, he was put in liberty on parole. In October, without waiting for his exchange, he went into the Persian Gulf to

take the fort of Bender-Abassé, with three English vessels captured at Sumatra, manned by two hundred men. He was anew taken prisoner while returning to France in 1760. Appointed lieutenant-general in 1763, his good luck raised much jealousy. He showed for *blue officers* * a partiality which offended many navy officers. All say of him that he was a brave soldier, but a poor general or naval officer.

“Vice-admiral in 1777, he raised his pennant on the *Languedoc* of ninety guns; left Toulon on the 13th of April, 1778; reached Rhode Island on the 29th of July. On the 8th of August he forced the passage into Newport, and entered Connecticut Bay.† The next day he sailed against the forces of Howe, who had joined Byron. A tempest which raged from the 11th to the 12th of August, 1778, divided d’Estaing’s fleet. The *Languedoc*

* Name in the old navy, applied to an officer; a captain appointed on his own ship.

† Mistake of the author; should be Narragansett Bay.



D'ESTAING.

only escaped by the unexpected assistance of two French ships. From Newport, where he was left by Sullivan and La Fayette, d'Estaing withdrew to Boston, and aroused thus the anger of the Americans, who accused him of treason. La Fayette defended him. He went to the Windward Islands, and his title of Commander-general of the Windward Islands aroused the antagonism of de Bouillé. He tried in vain to take Saint Lucia, but captured Saint Vincent and Grenada on the 4th of July, 1779, by a sudden attack, at the head of thirteen hundred men. The next day he gave battle to the English squadron of Byron, who took refuge at Saint Christopher. He then tried vainly to take Savannah. Wounded and repulsed, he was disgraced in 1780 on his return to France, and remained without employment until 1783.

“In 1787, member of the Assembly of the Notables, commander of the National Guard of Versailles, he was a believer in

the Constitution by principle, but wished to save the king. His rôle was difficult. His deposition about the Queen before the Revolutionary Tribunal was variously criticised. He soon followed her to the scaffold, on the 28th of August, 1794.

“ ‘D’Estaing found himself, alone, charged with a very important mission in America. Only twelve vessels had been intrusted to him, and no hope had been left him of any succor or any increase of strength. He might meet, not only during his passage, but especially in the Atlantic, forces much superior to those he commanded, and, despite this incontestable inferiority, he was able to raise the honor of the new French Navy, to obtain genuine successes, and dispel the very unfavorable opinion then general in Europe on the possibility of France ever placing seriously a few vessels on the ocean, and especially of being able for one instant to sustain a struggle with England. This is a glory which the contemporary writers

accord without contest to the French admiral, a glory which the misfortune he endured and the actual situation of the navy of France has too much effaced.' †

* * * * *

"Vioménil (Antoine-Charles du Houx, called Baron de), born at Fauconcourt, in the Vosges, in 1728; entered the service in 1740, at the age of twelve, with the rank of sub-lieutenant in the regiment of Limousin, and became captain at the age of nineteen, in 1747. He was wounded at the siege of Berg-op-Zoom; served afterwards in Hanover and in Corsica, became colonel in 1759, brigadier in 1762, *maréchal de camp* in 1770. He started in 1771 for Poland, where he fought against the Russians, and directed the defense at the castle of Cracow.

"The Baron de Vioménil crossed to America on the *Conquérant*, on which were de Custine, de Ménonville, Blanchard, de Chabannes and de Pangé, aids-de-

†Quoted by the writer from "Histoire Raisonnée de la dernière Guerre," by de Saint-Vallier, Liège, 1783.

camp; Brizon, naval-officer, secretary of the Baron, and part of the regiment of Saintonge. During the expedition of 1781, Baron de Vioménil played a very important part. He was at the head of the expedition which started in March on the vessels of Destouches to take succors to Virginia by way of Chesapeake Bay. The expedition was fruitless; but it was not the fault of de Vioménil or de Laval, who were leading it, and who bore themselves bravely. The Baron de Vioménil afterwards commanded the rear guard during the march between New York and Williamsburg. It is he who directed the two simultaneous attacks on the English redoubts during the night of the 14th to the 15th of October. While La Fayette and Steuben were capturing the one on the right, he himself, sword in hand, led towards the enemies' intrenchments the first division of the column on the left, commanded by Guillaume de Deux-Ponts, de l'Estrade and de Rostaing. The success

was prompt and decisive. The Baron de Vioménil then went to spend a few months in France. He returned to America on the *Aigle* in 1782, after having been made commander of the order of Saint-Louis and lieutenant-general. He rejoined the army at Crampond, and handed over to de Rochambeau the two million five hundred thousand *livres* he had brought him. He took the troops back to France, and lived at La Rochelle until 1789, epoch when he made part of the Army of Paris under the orders of de Broglie. He opposed energetically the Revolution. During the fighting of the 10th of August, 1792, he proved himself one of the best and most courageous defenders of the royal family. Severely wounded, he was picked up and hidden in a friend's house, where he died at the end of three months. He was a member of the Order of the Cincinnati.” *

* Balch, ii. pp. 113-249.

Considerable dispute has arisen as to who originated the expedition against Cornwallis at Yorktown. Clinton maintained that de Grasse had first suggested it—some give the credit to Washington,—and others to Rochambeau. The truth most likely is that such a measure was self evident to any military man. When Clinton had reinforced New York so that it could not be taken, and De Grasse's powerful fleet was known to be on the way, it required little discernment to perceive that the endeavor to capture Lord Cornwallis was the one thing to be attempted. As soon as the American Revolutionaries had the superiority on water there could be no hesitation as to which step to take. / Here is the great debt we owe to France. It must be admitted that without the fleets under De Grasse and De Barras, the 4,000 troops under Rochambeau and the 3,000 under St. Simon, and the heavy siege artillery of the French, it would have been out of the question for

Washington with his little army of 5,000 to have caused the surrender of Cornwallis.

On September 29, 1781, the allied forces began the investment of Yorktown. De Grasse had part of his fleet in the mouth of the river while the remainder of his ships guarded the mouth of the Bay at the Capes.

On the third day the French siege guns and mortars which had been brought from Rhode Island opened fire and soon the British ships were set ablaze by the red hot balls and shells. The allied forces pressed on and on. Two advanced redoubts were assaulted, one by French troops under Vioménil and the other by Americans under La Fayette. On the night of the 14th, Alexander Hamilton led La Fayette's men and carried a redoubt in a few moments. Finding it impossible to do otherwise, Cornwallis surrendered his army on October 19, 1781.

This battle achieved the independence

of our Country, though fighting continued at different points and the definite Treaty of Peace was not signed until September 3, 1783.

In connection with the great and decisive victory of Yorktown, Franklin wrote to his old friend Vergennes:

“Sir:—Your very obliging letter communicating the news of the important victory at York gave me infinite pleasure. The very powerful aid afforded by his Majesty to America this year has rivetted the affections of all that people, and the success has made millions happy. Indeed the king appears to me from this and other late events to be *le plus grand faiseur d'heureux* that this world affords. May God prosper him, his family and nation, to the end of time! I am, with respect, &c., &c.

“From this moment all was gratulation. The news, not unnaturally, reached England, by way of France. ‘How did Lord North take it?’ ‘As he would have taken

a cannonball in the heart,' Lord George Germain replied to that question.

"The French and American authorities published the full accounts they received. They translated for the widest circulation Washington's Order of the Day.

"Extracts from the General Orders of the Day for October 20, 1781

"The General congratulates the army on the glorious event of yesterday.

"The generous proofs which his Most Christian Majesty has given of his attachment to the Cause of America, while it undeceives those among our enemies who have been most blinded, ought to convince them of the consequences of the alliance, so fortunate and decisive, and ought to inspire all citizens of the United States with sentiments of the most unchangeable gratitude.

"The most numerous and most powerful fleet which ever appeared in these waters, commanded by an Admiral whose good

fortune and ability promised the greatest success, an army selected with the greatest care both for officers and soldiers,—these were remarkable pledges of his affection for the United States. The union of these powerful forces assured to us the brilliant success which we have now obtained.

“The General avails himself of this occasion to beg his Excellency the Count de Rochambeau to receive the expression of his lively gratitude for the counsel and assistance that he has always received from him. He wishes also to express his most cordial thanks to the generals Baron de Vioménil, Chevalier de Chatellux, Marquis de St. Simon, and Comte de Vioménil, and to Brigadier General de Choisy (who held an independent command) for the admirable manner in which they worked for the success of the common cause. He hopes that the Count de Rochambeau will be kind enough to testify at once to the Army which he commands



The count de ROCHAMBEAU.

(As Marshal of France 1791)

the high opinion which the General has formed of the distinguished merit of the officers and soldiers of the different corps. He begs him to present in his name to the regiment of Gatinois and of Deux-Ponts the two bronze pieces of artillery which they took from the enemy, and he hopes that they will keep these pieces as a memorial of the courage with which, sword in hand, they captured the enemy's redoubt on the night of the 14th, and that they may thus serve to perpetuate the remembrance of an occasion in which officers and soldiers vied with each other in the display of the most distinguished courage.

“If the General should specially thank all those who deserved his thanks he would have to name the whole army. He is obliged by his wishes, his duty, and his gratitude, to express to the major-generals Lincoln, the Marquis de La Fayette, and Steuben, his acknowledgements for the arrangements which they made in the trenches, to General Du Portail, and to

Col. Quevenal, for the ability and skill which was displayed in the laying out of the works, to Gen. Knox and to Col. Daberville for the care and indefatigable attention with which they accelerated the transport of the artillery and munitions, as well as for their judicious use of them, and the activity which they showed in the batteries. He begs the officers whom he has just named to convey his thanks to the officers and soldiers of the corps which they respectively command.

“The General would show himself guilty of a singular ingratitude, such as he hopes he may never be guilty of, if he neglected to express in the most distinct terms his thanks to his Excellency Gov. Nelson, for the assistance which he has personally received from him, as well as from the militia which he commanded, which deserves for its activity, its courage, and emulation, the most distinguished applause.” *

* “Franklin in France,” by Edward E. Hale and Edward E. Hale, Jr., page 465.

At the Centennial Celebration of the siege and surrender of Yorktown, October 19, 1881, when an imposing monument was dedicated in the presence of the President of the United States, the French Ambassador, and representatives of the families of La Fayette, Rochambeau, and other French officers who aided the United States in the Revolution, President Arthur delivered the following Address of Welcome:

“Upon this soil, one hundred years ago, our forefathers brought to a successful issue their heroic struggle for independence. Here and then was established, and as we trust made secure upon this continent for ages yet to come, that principle of government which is the very fiber of our political system—the sovereignty of the people. The resentments which attended and for a time survived the clash of arms have long since ceased to animate our hearts. It is with no feeling of exultation over a defeated foe that to-day we summon up

a remembrance of those events which have made holy the ground whereon we tread. Surely no such unworthy sentiment could find harbor in our hearts, so profoundly thrilled with expressions of sorrow and sympathy which our national bereavement has evoked from the people of England and their august sovereign; but it is altogether fitting that we should gather here to refresh our souls with the contemplation of the unfaltering patriotism, the sturdy zeal and the sublime faith which achieved the results we now commemorate. For so, if we learn aright the lesson of the hour, shall we be incited to transmit to the generations which shall follow the precious legacy which our fathers left to us—the love of liberty protected by law. Of that historic scene which we here celebrate no feature is more prominent, and none more touching, than the participation of our gallant allies from across the seas. It was their presence which gave fresh and vigorous impulse to the hopes

of our countrymen when well-nigh disheartened by a long series of disasters. It was their noble and generous aid, extended in the darkest period of the struggle, which sped the coming of our triumph and made the capitulation at Yorktown possible a century ago. To their descendants and representatives who are here present as the honored guests of the nation, it is my glad duty to offer cordial welcome. You have a right to share with us the associations which cluster about the day when your fathers fought side by side with our fathers in the cause, which was here crowned with success, and none of the memories awakened by this anniversary are more grateful to us than the reflections that the national friendships here so closely cemented have outlasted the mutations of a changeful century. God grant, my countrymen, that they may ever remain unshaken and that henceforth, with ourselves and with all the nations of the earth, we may be at peace!

“THE FRENCH MINISTER’S ADDRESS

“M. Max Outrey, in behalf of the French delegation, was introduced by Secretary Blaine, and delivered the following address:

“The French government has felt much touched by the friendly sentiments which inspired the United States with the thought of asking France to participate in the celebration of the Yorktown Centennial, and heartily desires to respond in a manner worthy of both republics to the invitation sent by the President of the United States in behalf of the people of America. The manifestations of public sympathy following the initiative taken by the Congress of the United States, bidding France to this national festival, has been looked upon by us not only as an act of the highest courtesy, but especially as a mark of affectionate regard, having the noble aim of cementing yet more closely the ties which unite the two republics. In commemoration of this day, which represents one of

the grandest events of the political existence of this country, the French government has sent a mission, composed of special delegates, from different departments, and the President of the French republic, wishing to mark his personal sympathy, has sent one of his own aids-de-camp. They thus desire to show particularly their appreciation of the graceful compliment paid to our country. Each and all of us are proud of having been called to the honor of representing France on this auspicious day. The monument which is here to be erected will not only recall a glorious victory—it will perpetuate the recollections of an ever-faithful alliance, faithful through the trials and vicissitudes of an eventful century, and as the President of the French republic has so truly said, it will consecrate the union sprung from generous and liberal aspirations, and which the institutions we can now boast of in common must necessarily strengthen and develop for the good of

both countries. In coming to this Yorktown Centennial we come to celebrate the day which ended that long and bitter struggle against a great nation, now our mutual ally and friend, who here, as under all skies where her flag has floated, has left ineffaceable marks of her grand and civilizing spirit. We come to celebrate the glorious date when the heroes of independence were able to set their final seal to the solemn proclamation of the 4th of July, 1776. We come also to salute the dawn of that era of prosperity when, led by her great men, America permitted the intelligence of her people to soar and their energy to manifest itself, and thus the power of the United States has strengthened, and every year has added to the prestige which surrounds her star-spangled banner.

“When France sent from beyond the seas the co-operation of her army and her navy to this valiant people, engaged in a war for its independence; when La Fay-

ette, Rochambeau, de Grasse, and so many others drew in their footsteps the young and brave scions of our most illustrious families they yielded to a generous impulse and came with disinterested courage to sustain the cause of liberty, a blessing went with their endeavors and gave success to their arms, for when, one hundred years ago, as to-day, the French and the Americans grasped each others' hands at Yorktown, they realized that they had helped to lay the corner-stone of a great edifice. But surely the most farsighted among those men would have started had he been able to look down the long vista of a century and see at this end this republic, then young and struggling with all the difficulties which surrounded her, now calm, radiant, and beaming with her halo of prosperity. The great Washington himself, whose genius foresaw the destiny of this country, could not have predicted this. Truly the United States have made, especially in these later years, gigantic

strides along the route to still greater progress by showing to the world what can be accomplished by an energetic and intelligent nation, always as respectful of its duties as jealous of its rights, America has given a great example and has been a cause of rejoicing to all true lovers of liberty. France is proud of having contributed to found this great republic, and her wishes for your prosperity are deep and sincere. The mutual friendship is founded on many affinities of taste and aspirations which time cannot destroy, and future generations, I trust, will assist again in this same place, at the spectacle, unprecedented in history, of two great nations renewing from century to century a compact of fraternal and imperishable affection. I will not close without thanking the Federal Government, the different States of the Union of which the delegation have been the guests, also the people of America, for the sympathy and welcome extended to the representa-

tives of France. Each of us will treasure the recollection of American hospitality and of the friendly sentiments which have been manifested to us in every place and in every sphere.

“ADDRESS OF THE MARQUIS DE
ROCHAMBEAU

“CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES:—
You have invited us to celebrate with you the great achievement of arms, and we did not hesitate to brave the terrors of the ocean to say to you that what our fathers and brothers did in 1781, we, their sons, would be willing to do to-day, and to attest our constant friendship, and to further show that we cherish the same sentiments as our fathers in those glorious days we celebrate. In the name of my companions who represent here the men who fought in 1781, permit me to hope that the attachment formed in these days around this monument which is about to be erected, will be renewed in one hun-

dred years and that our descendants will again celebrate the victory which joined our fathers in comradeship and alliance." *

The historical oration was delivered by the Hon. Robert Charles Winthrop of Boston, a lineal descendant of John Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts Bay, and himself a statesman who had held various honorable positions in the State and Nation.

These extracts are specially pertinent and show clearly the part taken by the French at Yorktown, with notices of their chief commanders:

"Yes, it is mine, and somewhat peculiarly mine, perhaps, notwithstanding the presence of the official representatives of my native State, to bear the greetings of Plymouth Rock to Jamestown; of Bunker Hill to Yorktown; of Boston recovered

*Report of the Commission created in accordance with a joint resolution of Congress, approved March 3, 1881, providing for the erection of a monument at Yorktown, Va., commemorative of the Surrender of Lord Cornwallis. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883.

from the British forces in '76 to Mount Vernon, the home in life and death of her illustrious Deliverer; and there is no office within the gift of Congresses, Presidents, or People, which I could discharge more cordially and fervently. And may I not hope,—as one who is proud to feel coursing in his veins the Huguenot blood of a Massachusetts patriot, who enjoyed the most affectionate relations with the young La Fayette, when he first led the way to our assistance;—as one, too, who has personally felt the warm pressure of his own hand, and received a benediction from his own lips, under a father and a mother's roof, nearly threescore years ago, when he was the guest of the nation; and let me add, as an old presiding officer in that representative chamber at the Capitol, where side by side with that of Washington,—its only fit companion-piece—the admirable full length portrait of the Marquis, the work and gift of his friend Ary Scheffer, was long a daily and hourly

feast for my eyes and inspiration for my efforts;—may I not hope, that I shall not be regarded as a wholly unfit or inappropriate organ of that profound sense of obligation and indebtedness to La Fayette, to Rochambeau, to De Grasse, and to France, which is felt and cherished by us all at this hour?

“For indeed, fellow-citizens, our earliest and latest acknowledgments are due this day to France, for the inestimable services which gave us her crowning victory of the 19th of October, 1781. It matters not for us to speculate now whether American Independence might not have been achieved without her aid. It matters not for us to calculate or conjecture how soon, or when, or under what circumstances that grand result might have been accomplished. We all know that, God willing, such a consummation was as certain in the end as to-morrow’s sunrise, and that no earthly potentates or powers, single or conjoined, could have

carried us back into a permanent condition of colonial dependence and subjugation. From the first blood shed at Lexington and Concord, from the first battle at Bunker Hill, Great Britain had lost her American colonies, and their established and recognized independence was only a question of time.

“Even the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga, in 1777—the only American battle included by Sir Edward Creasy in his ‘Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World,’ of which he says that ‘no military event can be said to have exercised a more important influence on the future fortunes of mankind’; and of which the late Lord Stanhope had said that this surrender ‘had not merely changed the relation of England and the feeling of Europe towards these insurgent colonies, but had modified, for all times to come, the connection between every Colony and every parent State,’—even this most memorable surrender gave only a new assurance of

a foregone conclusion, only hastened the march of events to a predestined issue. That march for us was to be ever onward until the goal was reached. However slow or difficult it might prove to be, at one time or at another time, the motto and spirit of John Hampden were in the minds and hearts and wills of all our American patriots. ‘Nulla vestigia retrorsum.’—‘No footsteps backward.’

“Nor need we be too curious to inquire, to-day, into any special inducements which France may have had to intervene thus nobly in our behalf, or into any special influences under which her King, and Court, and People resolved at last to undertake the intervention. We may not forget, indeed, that our own Franklin, the great Bostonian, had long been one of the American Commissioners in Paris, and that the fame of his genius, the skill and adroitness of his negotiations, and the magnetism of his personal character and presence were no secondary or subordinate elements in

the results which were accomplished. As was well said of him by a French historian, 'His virtues and his renown negotiated for him; and before the second year of his mission had expired, no one conceived it possible to refuse fleets and an army to the compatriots of Franklin.'

"The Treaty of Commerce and the Treaty of Alliance were both eminently Franklin's work, and both were signed by him as early as the 6th of February, 1778. His name and his services are thus never to be omitted or overlooked in connection with the great debt which we owe to France, and which we so gratefully commemorate on this occasion.

"But signal as his services were, Franklin cannot be named as standing first in this connection. Nearly two years before his Treaties were negotiated and signed, a step had been taken by another than Franklin which led, directly and indirectly, to all that followed.

“The young LAFAYETTE was but nineteen years of age, a Captain of the French dragoons, stationed at Metz. At a dinner given by the commandant of the garrison to the Duke of Gloucester, a brother of George III., he happened to hear the tidings of our Declaration of Independence which had reached the Duke that very morning from London. It formed the subject of animated and excited conversation, in which the enthusiastic young soldier took part. And before he had left the table, an inextinguishable spark had been struck and kindled in his breast, and his whole heart was on fire in the cause of American liberty. Regardless of the remonstrances of his friends, of the Ministry, and of the King himself, in spite of every discouragement and obstacle, he soon tears himself away from a young and lovely wife, leaps on board a vessel which he had provided for himself, braves the perils of a voyage across the Atlantic, then swarming with cruisers, reaches

Philadelphia, by way of Charleston, South Carolina, and so wins at once the regard and confidence of the Continental Congress, by his avowed desire to risk life in our service, at his own expense, without pay or allowance of any sort, that on the 31st of July, 1777, before he was quite yet twenty years old, he was commissioned a Major General of the Army of the United States.

“It is hardly too much to say, that from that dinner at Metz, and that 31st day of July in Philadelphia, may be dated the train of influences and events which culminated, four year afterwards, in the surrender of Cornwallis to the Allied Forces of America and France.”*

In describing the officers surrounding Washington at the time of the surrender of Yorktown, Mr. Winthrop says:

“Connecticut was represented by Lieutenant Colonel Ebenezer Huntington and

*Oration on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Surrender of Lord Cornwallis delivered at Yorktown, 19th October, 1881, by Robert C. Winthrop, p. 4.

Major John Palsgrave Wyllis, and especially by Colonel Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., a Secretary and Aide-de-Camp of Washington, and the son of the great Revolutionary War, Governor Jonathan Trumbull; and by Colonel DAVID HUMPHREYS, another and most valued member of Washington's Military family, to whose care the captured standards of the surrendering army were consigned, who received a sword from Congress in acknowledgment of his fidelity and ability, and to whom Washington presented the epaulettes worn by himself throughout the War, now among the treasures of the Massachusetts Historical Society; afterwards a Minister to Portugal and to Spain; one of the earliest importers of merino sheep; a miscellaneous and somewhat prolific poet; and who commanded the militia of Connecticut in the War of 1812." †

* * * * *

"Such, Fellow-Citizens, were the principal officers, from other States, and other

†*Ibid.*, p. 33.

parts of the country and of the world, who were gathered in this Virginia field, in immediate association with the American Line.

“Opposite to them, in that splendid French Line, stood the gallant strangers who had been so generously sent to our aid.

“Here, at the head of them, was the veteran Count de ROCHAMBEAU, now in the fifty-sixth year of his age, and in the thirty-ninth year of his military service, who had long been known and noted for his bravery in the wars of the Continent. Cool, prudent, reserved, conciliatory, no one could have been more perfectly suited to the delicate duties which devolved upon him in co-operating with an army of a different land and language, and no one could have discharged those duties more faithfully. Perhaps his very ignorance of the English tongue was a positive safeguard and advantage for him; it certainly saved him from hearing or saying any rash

or foolish things. Washington bore witness, in the letter bidding him farewell, to the high sense he entertained of the invaluable services he had rendered 'by the constant attention he had paid to the interest of the American cause, by the exact order and discipline of the corps under his command, and by his readiness at all times to give facility to every measure to which the force of the combined armies was competent.' Congress presented to him two of the captured cannon, with suitable inscriptions and devices—which long adorned the family château in the Vendôme—in testimony of the illustrious part he had played here. His name on the still-delayed Column—one of only three names in the originally prescribed inscription—will soon be engraved where all the world can read it. Returning home at the close of our war, he received the highest honors from his sovereign; was Governor successively of Picardy and Alsace; commanded the French Army of the North; and in

1791 was made a Marshal of France. Narrowly escaping the guillotine of Robespierre, he lived to receive the cordon of Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor from Napoleon, and died in 1807, at eighty-two years of age. We welcome the presence of his representative, the Marquis de Rochambeau, at this festival, and of Madame la Marquise, here happily at my side, and offer them the cordial recognition which is due to their name and rank.

“Here, in equal rank and honor with Rochambeau, stood the Count de GRASSE, in the fifty-eighth year of his age; who was associated with our War for Independence hardly more than a month, but who during that momentous month did enough to secure our lasting respect and gratitude; whose services, as Lieutenant-General and Admiral of the Naval Army and Fleet of France, in yonder bay, were second in importance to none in the whole siege; to whom Washington did not hesi-

tate to write, the very day after the event: 'The surrender of York, from which so great glory and advantage are derived to the Allies, and the honor of which belongs to your Excellency.' The sympathies of all his companions here were deeply stirred, when, losing his famous flagship and a large part of his fleet on his way home, he reached England as a prisoner of Admiral Rodney, to be released only after our Treaty of Peace was signed; and, though he had vindicated his conduct before a court-martial demanded by himself, to die in retirement after a few years, without having regained the favor of a sovereign, who could pardon everything and anything but defeat. Honor this day to the memory of the brave Count de Grasse, whose name, as Washington wrote to Rochambeau on hearing of his death, 'will be long deservedly dear to this country!'

"Here, second in command of the French Line, was that worthy and excel-



Ternay, Charles-Joseph - Marquis de Ternay marquis de Ternay

lent General, the Baron de VIOMESNIL, who brought a gallant brother, the Viscount, with him, and who himself returned home 'to be killed before the last rampart of Constitutional Royalty,' on the 10th of August, 1792.

"Here, in hardly inferior rank, was Major-General the Marquis de CHASTELLUX; genial, brilliant, accomplished, the *Journal* of whose tour in America—indifferently translated and scandalously annotated by an English adventurer—is full of the liveliest interest; who returned home to be one of the immortal Forty of the French Academy, welcomed by a discourse of Buffon on Taste; and, better still, to receive one of the very few humorous and playful letters which Washington ever wrote—bantering him 'on his catching that terrible contagion, domestic felicity,' which, alas! he only lived to enjoy for six years. Washington had before written to him, soon after his return home: 'I can truly say, that never in my

life have I parted with a man to whom my soul clave more sincerely than it did to you.'

"The Admiral Count de BARRAS was here—the senior naval officer of France at the siege, but who generously waived his seniority; who was privileged, however, to sign the Articles of Capitulation for himself and the Count de Grasse; who was fortunate enough to escape any share in the defeat by Rodney; who reached home in season to be promoted, and then to die before the outbreak of a Revolution in which his nephew, of the same name, was famous as a Jacobin and regicide, and afterwards as the head of the Directory.

"The magnificent Duke de LAUZUN was here, conspicuous by his tall hussar cap and plume,—afterwards Duke de Biron,—a gay Lothario in the salon, but dauntless in the field, who, at the head of his legion, put Tarleton himself to flight; but who returned home to be, in 1793, one of the victims of the guillotine.

“Two of the **LAVAL-MONTMORENCYS** were here: the Marquis, at the head of the Bourbonnais regiment; and his young son, the Viscount Matthieu, afterwards the Duke de Montmorency—an intimate friend of Madame de Staël, long a resident at Coppet, and who was eminently distinguished, in later years, for his accomplishments and his philanthropy.

“The young Count **AXEL DE FERSEN** was here,—a Swedish Nobleman, an Aid to Rochambeau, ‘the Adonis of the Camp’; who returned to France to become a suitor of Madame de Staël and a favorite of Marie Antoinette; to whose zeal in aiding the flight of the King and Queen, with ‘a glass-coach and a new berline,’ himself on the box, Carlyle devotes an early and humorous chapter of his ‘French Revolution,’—and who was killed at last by a mob in Stockholm, in 1810, on an unfounded charge of having been privy to the murder of a popular prince.

“The brave young Duke de ROUERIE was here, under the modest title of Colonel Armand, after good service in our cause for two years had sailed for France in February, 1781, but had returned in September in season to be at the siege, and was a volunteer at the capture of one of the redoubts. Before the war he was made a Brigadier General on the special recommendation of Washington. He went home at last to be a prisoner in the Bastille, and to die of fever or of poison, in a forest, to which he had fled from Danton and Robespierre.

“The Marquis de St. SIMON, we know, was here, in command of the whole splendid corps, just landed from the fleet, called by Rochambeau ‘one of the bravest men that lived’; wounded while commanding in the French trenches, but who insisted on being carried to the assault at the head of his troops; who, after our war was ended, entered the service of Spain, and,

after various fortunes, died a Captain-General of that Kingdom.

“But a second Marquis de St. SIMON was here also, of still greater historic notoriety—a young soldier of twenty-one, who had been a pupil of D’Alembert; who lived to be the proposer to the Viceroy of Mexico of a canal to unite the Atlantic and the Pacific; and to be the author of a scheme for the fundamental reconstruction of society;—the founder of St. Simonianism, with Comte for a time as one of his disciples, and whose published works fill not less than twenty volumes.

“And here was the Count Matthieu DUMAS, another of Rochambeau’s aids, who bore a conspicuous part at one of the redoubts, and was one of the first to enter it, who returned home to be a member of the Assembly and a peer of France; whose last military service was with Napoleon at Waterloo, and who, in 1830, gave active assistance to La Fayette in

placing Louis Philippe on the throne—dying at eighty-four years of age.

“Count Charles De LAMETH was here, too, as an Adjutant General, and was severely wounded at the storming of the redoubts, who afterwards served in the French Army of the North till the memorable 10th of August, 1792, became a Deputy at the Restoration, and was living as late as 1832.

“But how can I attempt to portray the numerous, I had almost said the numberless, French officers of high name and family who were gathered on this field a hundred years ago, and who went home to so many strange fortunes, and not a few of them to such sad fates? It would require no small share of the genius which old Homer displayed in his wonderful catalogue of the ships and forces which came to the siege of Troy, when Pope translates him as demanding of the Muses; ‘A thousand tongues, a throat of brass, and adamantine lungs.



BOUGAINVILLE.

“Time certainly would fail me were I to give more than the names of General de Choisy and the Marquis de Rostaing; of the Marquis and Count de Deux-Ponts; of the Counts de Custine and de Charlus, d’Audichamp and de Dillon, de l’Estrade, de St. Maime, and d’Olonne; of the Viscounts de Noailles and de Pondeux; of Admiral Destouches and Commodore the Count de Bougainville; of General Desandrouins and Colonel the Viscount d’Aboville; of Colonels de Querenet and Gimat, and Major Galvan; of M. de Menonville and the Marquis de Vauban; of M. de Béville and M. Blanchard; of Chevalier da la Vallette, M. de Bressolles, and M. de Broglie; of Chevalier, afterwards the Baron, Durand, a General of the French Army at the Restoration; of M. de Montesquieu, son of the author of ‘L’Esprit des Lois’; of M. de Mirabeau, brother of the matchless orator; of M. de Berthier, afterwards one of Napoleon’s Chiefs of Staff, a Marshal of France, and

Prince of Wagram. I must have omitted many who ought to be named in this enumeration; but enough have certainly been given to show what a cloud of witnesses and actors were here, whose names have since been celebrated in the annals of their own country, and which deserve a grateful mention in ours to-day. That famous 'Field of Cloth of Gold,' two centuries and a half before, when Francis I. and Henry VIII. met, in the valley of Ardres, to arrange an ominous family alliance, had hardly a more imposing representation of the nobles and notables of either land." †

* * * * *

"We do not forget that it was from a Bourbon Monarch we received this aid. We do not forget of what dynasty the vigilant and far-sighted Vergennes, and the accomplished but somewhat wavering Necker, were Ministers,—together with the aged Maurepas, over whose death-bed the tidings of this surrender 'threw a halo.' We do not forget that it was in

†Ibid. p. 39.

the very uppermost ranks of French society that an enthusiasm for our contest for freedom first caught and kindled. We do not forget that it was from the highest nobility of France that so many of her brave soldiers came over to help us, and went home, alas! to reap such a harvest of horrors for themselves. We would not breathe a word or thought to-day in disparagement of those who were the immediate instruments of our success on this field. The sad fate of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, and of so many of the gay young officers who were gathered here around Washington and Rochambeau, a century ago, cannot be recalled by Americans without emotion, as they reflect that, by the very act of helping us to the establishment of republican institutions, they were preparing the way for dethronement, exile, or death on the scaffold, for themselves.

“But it is to France that our acknowledgments are due,—to France, then an Ab-

solute Monarchy, afterwards an Empire, then a Constitutional Monarchy, again an Empire—but always France: **TOUJOURS LA FRANCE!** She has many glories to boast of in her history, glories in art and science, glories in literature and philosophy, glories in peace and war, brilliant statesmen and orators, heroic soldiers and captains and conquerors on land and on sea; and even in the later pages of that history, amid all her recent reverses, the endurance and fortitude of her marvelously mercurial people—rising superior to what seemed a crushing downfall—have won the admiration and sympathy of the world. When I witnessed, personally, by a happy chance, the removal of the last scaffolding from that superb column in the Place Vendôme, restored in all its original beauty as a priceless monument of history, I could not but feel that the glories of France were safe. When we all witnessed from afar the magic promptness with which, at the call of her late ad-

mirable President, THIERS, and almost as at the touch of Midas, those millions of gold came pouring into the public coffers to provide for the immediate payment of her ransom from Germany, we all could not fail to feel, that she had a reserved power to reinstate herself, as she has done, among the foremost nations of the world. Yet as her children, and her children's children for a thousand years, and till time shall be no more, shall review her varied and most impressive annals, since Gaul was conquered by Julius Caesar, down through the days of Clovis and Charlemagne, through all her dynasties,—Merovingian, Carlovingian and Capetian, Valois, Bourbon, Bonaparte, or Orleans,—their eyes will still rest, and still be riveted with pride, on the brief but eventful story of this 19th of October, 1781. And as they read that story, her classical scholars will recall the account which the great Roman historian, Livy, has left us, of the splendid ceremonial at the celebration of

the Isthmian games, when Titus Quinctius, the Roman Pro-consul and General, having subdued Philip of Macedon, and given freedom and independence to Greece, from lip to lip the saying ran, and resounded over Corinth, in words which might almost have been written prophetically, as well as historically—

“THAT THERE IS A NATION IN THE WORLD, WHICH, AT ITS OWN EXPENSE, WITH ITS OWN LABOR, AND AT ITS OWN RISK, WAGED WAR FOR THE LIBERTY OF OTHERS: AND THIS IS NOT MERELY FOR CONTIGUOUS STATES, OR FOR NEAR NEIGHBORS, OR FOR COUNTRIES THAT MADE PART OF THE SAME CONTINENT; BUT THAT THEY EVEN CROSSED THE SEAS FOR THE PURPOSE, SO THAT NO UNLAWFUL POWER SHOULD SUBSIST ON THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH, BUT THAT JUSTICE, RIGHT AND LAW SHOULD EVERYWHERE HAVE SOVEREIGN SWAY.” *

**Ibid.* p. 53.

In 1881 these interesting letters from the collection of Mr. Gordon L. Ford, of Brooklyn, New York, were privately printed:

“(Noah Webster to Washington.)

“Sir:

“Having engaged to write, for Mr. Morse’s Geography a sketch of the History of the late war, I take the liberty of making an enquiry respecting a fact which I am told is commonly misrepresented, & which perhaps no person but the Commander in chief of the late armies in America can set right. An opinion, Sir, is very general that the junction of the French fleet and the American armies at York Town was the result of a preconcerted plan between yourself and the Count de Grasse; & that the preparations for attacking New York were merely a feint. But the late Quarter Master General * has assured me that a combined attack was intended to be made upon New

[(*) Col. Timothy Pickering.]

York, & that the arrival of the French fleet in the Bay of Chesapeake was unexpected & changed the plan of operations.

“A true state of the facts is all I have to request of your Excellency,—& I fear that this request may be improper and indecent. But in writing history, it is of infinite consequence to know the springs of action as well as the events; and a wish to discover and commemorate truth, is my sole motive for writing. Be pleased, Sir, to accept this as an apology for giving trouble to a Gentleman who must be oppressed by a multitude of attentions of more consequence,—& be assured that with perfect respect for yourself and family

“I am, Sir,

“Your Excellency’s

“Most Obliged & most humble Servant

“NOAH WEBSTER.

“New York, July 14th, 1788.”

“His Excellency Gen. Washington.”

“Mount Vernon, July 31st, 1788.

“Sir:

“I duly received your letter of the 14th instant, and can only answer you *briefly* and generally from *memory*: that a combined operation of the land and naval forces of France in America for the year 1781, was preconcerted the year before: that the point of attack was not absolutely agreed upon, * because it could not be foreknown where the enemy would be most susceptible of impression; and because we (having command of the water with sufficient means of conveyance) could transport ourselves to any spot with the greatest celerity: that it was determined by me (nearly twelve months before hand) at all hazards to give out and cause it to be believed by the highest military as well as civil Officers that New York was the destined place of attack, for the impor-

*Because it would be easy for the Count de Grasse, in good time before his departure from the West Indies, to give notice by Express, at what place he could conveniently first touch to receive advice.

York, & that the arrival of the French fleet in the Bay of Chesapeake was unexpected & changed the plan of operations.

“A true state of the facts is all I have to request of your Excellency,—& I fear that this request may be improper and indecent. But in writing history, it is of infinite consequence to know the springs of action as well as the events; and a wish to discover and commemorate truth, is my sole motive for writing. Be pleased, Sir, to accept this as an apology for giving trouble to a Gentleman who must be oppressed by a multitude of attentions of more consequence,—& be assured that with perfect respect for yourself and family

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“Most Obliged & most humble Servant

“NOAH WEBSTER.

“New York, July 14th, 1788.”

“His Excellency Gen. Washington.”



Louis de Grasse

tant purpose of inducing the Eastern & Middle States to make greater exertions in furnishing specific supplies than they otherwise would have done, as well as for the interesting purpose of rendering the enemy less prepared elsewhere: that by these means and these alone Artillery, Boats, Stores and Provisions were in seasonable preparation to move with the utmost rapidity to any part of the continent—for the difficulty consisted more in providing, than knowing how to apply the military apparatus: that before the arrival of the Count de Grasse it was the fixed determination *to strike the enemy in the most vulnerable quarter* so as to ensure success with moral certainty, as our affairs were then in the most ruinous train imaginable: that New York was thought to be beyond our effort & consequently that the only hesitation that remained was between an attack upon the British Army in Virginia or that in Charleston—and finally, (by the intervention of several

communications & some incidents which cannot be detailed in a letter; and w'ch were *altogether unknown* to the late Quarter Master General of the Army, who was informed of nothing but what related to the immediate duties of his own department) the hostile Post in Virginia from being a *provisional & strongly expected* became *the definitive and certain object* of the Campaign.

“I only add, that it was never in contemplation to attack New York unless the Garrison should first have been so far degarnished to carry on the southern operation, as to render our success in the siege of that place as infallible as any future military event can ever be made.—For I repeat it and dwell upon it again & again—some splendid advantage (whether upon a larger or smaller scale was almost immaterial) was so essentially necessary to revive the expiring hopes and languid exertions of the Country at the crisis in question, that I never would have con-

misconceived & misrepresented. Notwithstanding most of the Papers which may properly be deemed official are preserved; yet the knowledge of innumerable things of a more delicate & secret nature is confined to the perishable remembrance of some few of the present generation. With esteem

“I am, Sir,

“Your Most Obed’t H’ble Servt,

“G^o Washington.”

“Noah Webster, Esqr.”

The debt of gratitude has been expressed for what this country owes to France, not only for what Frenchmen did in the early days in the settlement of America, but for what she did in aiding it to achieve Independence and notably for being the contributing factor in the victory of Yorktown. All this I have said as a citizen of the United States and as one, not unmindful of my lineage from one who distinguished himself in so many

sented to embark in any enterprise; wherein from the most rational plan & accurate calculations, the favourable issue should not have appeared as clear to my view as a ray light. The failure of an attempt ag'st the Posts of the enemy could in no other possible situation during the war have been so fatal to our cause.

“That much trouble was taken and finesse used to misguide & bewilder Sir Henry Clinton in regard to the real object, by fictitious communications, as well as by making a deceptive provision of Ovens, Forage and Boats in his neighborhood, is certain. Nor were less pains taken to deceive our own army; for I had always conceived, when the imposition did not completely take place at home, it could never sufficiently succeed abroad.

“Your desire of obtaining truth is very laudable. I wish I had more leisure to gratify it; as I am equally solicitous that the undisguised verity should be known. Many circumstances will unavoidably be

that until quite recent years France was the only civilized country; and to-day she is still in the fore-front of the civilized world. Her language was the language of law, diplomacy, and of the court. Strike out from the English language the words of French origin, and you have struck out all the words of civilization. The Frenchman has thought out the great problems and thought them out most unselfishly, looking for no fee or reward except for the glory of benefiting the cause of humanity. French thought has been supreme in almost every domain. In arts—whether it be painting, sculpture or architecture; in science; in engineering; in applied mechanics; in surgery and medicine; in jurisprudence; in the arts and graces of life which distinguish the civilized man from the savage—his attire, his food, his manners. I have always admired the sweet domesticity of her life—the grace of her women—the joyous gayety which crowns the earnest character of her men.

ways in furthering the interests and welfare of this country,—the friend of Washington, and to whose hands were committed the flags surrendered by the enemy at Yorktown, for presentation to Congress.

May I now be permitted to say a few words as an individual, and as a friend of France.

The literary skill of her writers is unsurpassed, their purity of style and elegance of diction is inimitable and for logic they have no equals. It would be easy to prove how the whole modern world is a debtor to French thought. French thought which the illogical Englishman has put into practice, and which the shrewd American has exploited, which the German dreamers have pushed to fanciful extremities and rendered grotesque. The Italian alone has been able to assimilate it. The American Declaration of Independence is the product of French and Italian thought. It is not too much to say

Nay, further, is it not true that the whole world is the debtor of France?

Finally, let me correct a popular misconception that Frenchmen aided us out of their hatred to England. Their statesmen and politicians may have been suspicious and distrustful of the Court of St. James but it is a strange fact and one well worth remembering that never before had the French gentry been so friendly to England or so fond of English ways or customs. Mr. Trevelyan is perfectly right when he says on page 390 of the fourth volume of his *American Revolution* that nowhere was she so respected, admired and imitated than in the land of her hereditary foe. “The more frivolous of the French nobility copied and borrowed our simple dress, our less gaudy and far swifter carriages, our games at cards, the implements of our national sports, and the jargon of our race-course,—so far as they could frame their lips to pronounce it. Those among them who were of more ex-

As a Churchman, I remember that one of our Parishes is called St. Denis from the fact that few of the French who settled within the limits of the Parish of St. Thomas in South Carolina, knew English, and that therefore a distinct Parish was erected for them and called St. Denis.

Let me finally render this tribute to the French in this country. They founded no parties and formed no cliques. They merged themselves into the great body politic because they have always been loyal but unostentatious citizens. The debasement in our politics can never be laid to their doors.

Have you ever paused to reflect on the strange fact that France should have played such an important part in shaping the destinies, as she did in the early days of the two great English speaking races—England and America—and what a debt of gratitude both countries owe to France and her people?

ner in honour of an English officer that young La Fayette's enthusiasm for liberty over the seas was kindled. It was out of their very love for England and her ideals of liberty and freedom that the young gentry of France crossed a thousand leagues of sea to aid a struggling nation to win its liberty and its freedom.

There were moments when the leaders of the French Nation hesitated at the cost and the risk—but there was never a moment when the French people wavered in their devotion to the American cause. So universal was the desire of the French soldiers to come to America that orders had to be sent to the surgeons to be very careful in examining the men because many were concealing infirmities for fear of being left behind, and France wished only picked men to be sent. When we turn from the common soldier to the officers of the French army, we may be sure that it was no consideration of statecraft or national policy that impelled such men

altered nature, and tougher fibre, envied the individual liberty and responsible self-government which prevailed in England, and the opportunities there afforded for a strenuous and worthy public career. The pride of young French gentlemen, (wrote the scion of a great family in Perigord), was piqued by the contrast between their own situation, and that of men of their age and class beyond the Channel. 'Our minds dwelt upon the dignity, the independence, the useful and important existence of an English peer, or of a member of the House of Commons, and upon the proud and tranquil freedom which appertained to every citizen of Great Britain.' "

The spirit of liberty was moving over the waters and curiously enough it was cut of that very spirit of liberty of which England boasted and for which she was both hated and admired, that the alliance between France and America was born. We have seen how it was at a din-



as La Fayette and Rochambeau and d'Estaing, and the others to exchange the luxuries of French country life and the charms of Paris for the privations and hardships of camp life in the Revolutionary Army and the sufferings of Valley Forge. It was only the noble impulse of noble hearts that beat high in the cause of human liberty, that could impel men to such sacrifice. Nor have we in the United States been unmindful of this friendship and service of the French. At all the chief cities of the original thirteen states, at Savannah, Charleston, Baltimore, Annapolis, Washington, Philadelphia, New York, Newport, and Boston, are tablets, monuments, statuary and paintings—not only to officers, but even to the soldiers of France, to show that America **REMEMBERS**. At the Capitol at Washington, the Speaker sits between the portraits of Washington and La Fayette.

Shall not our hearts go forth in loving sympathy to our former ally and our pres-

ent friend in her present hour of stress when in stern array she is holding in check the foe on her northern territory, and with her old foe across the channel fighting on her side she trusts that she may yet win the battle for Liberty and Freedom against the tyranny of caste and bureaucracy. France seeks no material aid from us, but shall we not give her that which she in her proud reserve has the right to receive, from free America, loving and heartfelt messages of cheer and hope? Let her feel that American hearts beat in warm sympathy for her in her fight for hearth and home—fair sunny France, when now Burgundy, may as of yore, mourn that

“All her husbandry doth lie on heaps,
Corrupting in its own fertility.

Her vine, the merry cheerer of the
heart,
Unpruned dies.” *

As in the past we thought our cause

*Shakespeare's Henry the Fifth, Act V., Scene 1.

was just and right, so let our thoughts go out to our allies of yore, friends of yesterday and to-day, sharing their belief.

“Terrible the process,
But our cause is good;
Knowing all, Thou knowest
Whose the guilt of blood.
And, for him who sent them
To be slain and slay,
Judge, O God, between us
Justly, as to-day.” *

If, as neutrals, we can give no official utterance to the feelings of our hearts, we can and do in silent homage repeat the first toast of the Alliance of 1774—

“To America! To France!
To General Washington and to the Amer-
ican Army,
To the Independence of America!
To the Alliance of France and America!
May it never be broken!”

*Lushington’s “Inkerman.”

